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SUBJECT: UNHCR ASSESSMENT OF OPERATIONS AGAINST FDLR AND
LRA

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Deputy Representative, Mohamed Toure, recently met with PolCouns and PolOff to discuss security and humanitarian issues in Eastern DRC, as well as civilian protection challenges stemming from the separate joint operations against the LRA and the FDLR. Toure identified the lack of communication amongst the UPDF, FARDC, and MONUC as the biggest impediment to civilian protection in Dungu Territory. Toure also questioned UPDF techniques, which he claimed were the same techniques unsuccessfully employed against the LRA over the last 20 years in Uganda. On the situation in the Kivus, Toure expressed concern that the RDF and FARDC would not be able to fully respect the human rights of civilians when confronting the FDLR. Ninety-five percent of recent voluntary repatriations to Rwanda are made up of family members of FDLR combatants, according to UNHCR data. Toure cautioned that the recent repatriations are most likely only temporary. End summary.

Protection Problems in Orientale Province

¶2. (SBU) UNHCR's Deputy Representative for Protection, Mohamed Toure, recently met with PolCouns and PolOff to discuss civilian protection problems arising from the separate FARDC/UPDF and FARDC/RDF operations targeting the LRA and FDLR, respectively. According to Toure, one of the main problems with civilian protection in Dungu Territory, Orientale Province is the lack of coordination amongst the main actors. Due to language and cultural barriers, the four MONUC battalions in Dungu Territory (from Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, and Guatemala), do not communicate well with each other or with the local population. In addition, neither the UPDF nor the FARDC coordinates action or communicates well with MONUC. On a positive note, Toure said that the FARDC troops in the area, many of whom were trained by MONUC, and the Republican Guard troops were very well disciplined.

¶3. (SBU) According to Toure, UPDF techniques against the LRA are identical to the techniques it has unsuccessfully employed against the LRA over the last 20 years. As a nomadic group, the LRA can very easily splinter into smaller groups when attacked, then subsequently regroup into a larger fighting force when it feels less threatened. Another trademark of the LRA, which is repeating itself, is its tendency to exact reprisals on local populations.

¶4. (SBU) Toure, who just returned from a trip to Dungu, estimated that there are 300 MONUC troops currently outside of Dungu guarding the airport. Beyond guarding the airport and providing armed escorts to and from the city of Dungu, eight kilometers away, MONUC troops do not provide any active patrols for protecting civilians. He also estimated there were approximately 4,500 FARDC troops in and around the city of Dungu. MONUC troops in Dungu currently do not have the capacity to facilitate the arrival or the distribution of large shipments of humanitarian aid. The Swedish Government has reportedly pledged \$1 million to construct a compound to house humanitarian workers and supplies.

UNHCR Fears Exacerbation of Crisis in the Kivus

¶ 15. (SBU) Although he welcomed some kind of pressure against the FDLR, Toure shared UNHCR concerns about the joint FARDC/RDF operations. He questioned their ability to fully respect human rights and their lack of coordination with MONUC. MONUC's civil protection mandate becomes much more difficult if they are not kept abreast of military operations. UNHCR estimates that military operations against the FDLR may cause as many as 500,000 new displacements.

¶ 16. (SBU) With regards to news reports of a sharp rise in the number of FDLR members presenting themselves for repatriation to Rwanda, Toure estimated that 95 percent of recent voluntary repatriations were FDLR dependents and only 5 percent were actual combatants. UNHCR has 10 welcome sites set up in North and South Kivu for this purpose. However, UNHCR does not receive combatants. It refers them to MONUC DDRR first. UNHCR has set up an expedited process where it only keeps repatriation volunteers for two days at the welcome centers before transporting them to the repatriation exit points. Within the last week, UNHCR has repatriated 200 people each day to Rwanda.

¶ 17. (SBU) In Toure's opinion, it was very likely that FDLR combatants had opted to move their families to Rwanda temporarily to avoid anticipated heavy fighting with FARDC and RDF troops. The border with Rwanda was very porous and it was likely that the families would return to the DRC once the fighting ended. He called

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on Rwanda to create more political space, which would facilitate permanent returns.

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